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Chairman: Mr. Mihail HASEGANU (Romania).

AGENDA ITEMS 81, 82 AND 12

Question of the composition of the General Committee of the General Assembly (A/5519, A/SPC/L.101 and Add.1, A/SPC/L.106, A/SPC/L.107) (continued)

Question of equitable representation on the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council (A/5520 and Corr.1, A/SPC/L.104/Rev.1, A/SPC/L.105) (continued)

Report of the Economic and Social Council (chapter XIII (section VI)) (A/5503) (continued)

1. The CHAIRMAN announced that the representatives of Czechoslovakia and Poland had submitted an amendment (A/SPC/L.107) to draft resolution A/SPC/L.101 and Add.1.

2. Mr. CHAPDELAINE (Canada) said that his hopes that discussion would be confined to the best means of achieving an expansion of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, with unanimity as to the objective, had been disappointed by the statement of the Soviet Union representative at the 423rd meeting. In effect it interposed a veto on behalf of the Peking and Moscow Governments, thereby denying the legitimate aspirations of the new Member States from Africa and Asia for equitable representation on the Councils. The distinction drawn by the representatives of the Netherlands (420th meeting) and Guinea (423rd meeting) between the two questions—expansion of the Councils and the representation of China—had fallen on deaf ears. Yet, it was essential that the United Nations should keep its universal character and that each shade of opinion should be reflected in its various bodies. That was particularly true in the case of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council because of the vital nature of their activities. Valid as the claims of the new Members were, however, they should not be satisfied at the expense of the older Members. The great increase in the membership of the United Nations meant that a redistribution of existing seats would temporarily, if not permanently, deprive certain groups of repre-

sentation. Most countries could then hope to fill a seat on the Security Council at the most only once in a generation, and that was true of some countries which deserved to be heard more frequently in the Councils in view of the importance of their contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the United Nations. Expansion, and not redistribution, was the fair and reasonable solution.

3. The gentleman's agreement now governing the distribution of the non-permanent seats on the Security Council had been reached in 1946, when the United Nations had had only fifty-one Members. The urgent nature of the present situation was therefore apparent. His delegation would have preferred the expansion of the Councils to be carried out as part of the general revision of the Charter, of which it was only one aspect. That had been emphasized by the Prime Minister of Canada at the 1208th plenary meeting of the General Assembly. However, the report of the Committee on arrangements for a conference for the purpose of reviewing the Charter (A/5487) showed clearly that most Member States considered that present international circumstances were not propitious for the holding of a General Conference under Article 109 of the Charter. Recourse must therefore be had to Article 108, the proposed changes being regarded as temporary arrangements to be reviewed later with the Charter as a whole. In any case, his delegation could not accept an automatic dissolution of the 1946 gentleman's agreement, which could not be altered without the assent of all the parties. Canada, as a member of the Commonwealth, was not prepared to abandon its right to sit on the Security Council by giving that assent, and no doubt the other groups felt likewise. The urgency of providing new seats had been demonstrated by the liberties taken recently with the agreed allocation of seats. It was to those liberties, apparently, that the Soviet Union representative had objected. He had still wanted a full seat all the time for the Eastern European group, although that could not be justified numerically. For the General Committee too, the Soviet proposals had been purely on a group basis, irrespective of the number of States in each group.

4. The recasting of the Councils would certainly call for careful consultation with all the groups concerned. The extent to which they should be enlarged should depend not only on geographical factors but especially on the first criterion mentioned in Article 23 of the Charter, namely the contribution of Members to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the Organization. When all the factors mentioned in that Article were considered, the contribution made by the Commonwealth as a group was indeed great. Its member countries made a large financial contribution to the various activities of the United Nations and gave substantial support in

terms of money, men and equipment to United Nations peace-keeping operations. They played a prominent role in the work of the Economic and Social Council. The General Assembly could hardly expect Members to contribute substantially to such activities unless it was prepared to offer them a reasonable prospect of representation on the controlling organs. With the recent emphasis on geographic loyalties there had been some tendency to discount the Commonwealth as a group in the United Nations. To his delegation, however, the Commonwealth was a combination of many qualities which made it eminently suitable to be represented on the Councils. Its six members in 1946 had since increased to sixteen. Two more Commonwealth countries were shortly to apply for membership in the United Nations and the group would no doubt continue to grow. He therefore opposed any suggestion which did not give due weight to the existence of the Commonwealth and its contribution to United Nations affairs. It would be ironical if the United Nations failed to recognize a group dedicated to international co-operation over and above regional and racial differences.

5. Finally, a move must be made towards restoring the ratio established in 1945 between total membership and the number of seats on the Councils open to election. Expansion might be prevented unless the Soviet Union delegation reconsidered its position; if it would not do so, it would be responsible for the injustice to the new Members from Asia and Africa. However, too hasty a decision might do more harm than good, and his delegation would consider all concrete proposals for expansion in that light.

6. Mr. PECHOTA (Czechoslovakia), introducing the amendment submitted by Poland and Czechoslovakia (A/SPC/L.107) to draft resolution A/SPC/L.101 and Add.1, said that the principle of equitable representation should be applied to all categories of members of the General Committee. The changes proposed by the draft resolution adequately reflected the recent increase in the membership of the United Nations, and the time had come for them to be made. His delegation and that of Poland now proposed that a system of rotation of the Presidency of the General Assembly should also take its place among the rules. That was the only way in which all regions could have an equal opportunity of having their representatives elected to the Presidency. The absence of such a rule opened the door to arbitrariness and discrimination.

7. The proposal contained in the amendment was self-explanatory, and its adoption would be in the best interests of the General Assembly and all Member States. It was complementary to and in full accord with the objectives of draft resolution A/SPC/L.101 and Add.1, and he trusted that it would commend itself to the Committee.

8. Mr. CORNER (New Zealand) said that his country fully accepted the need to expand the membership of the General Committee and the two Councils. It would, however, be a mistake to take the line that resolutions for expansion requiring amendments to the Charter should be abandoned in view of the Soviet representative's statement at the 423rd meeting. It was widely agreed that a reasonable period, such as two years, should be given for ratification, and in that time much might happen; one of the great Powers might regain its freedom to make its own decisions in its own capital. The Committee should therefore adopt resolutions for expansion in a manner indicative of the great weight of favourable international opinion.

9. The chief difficulty in the debate so far had been in reaching agreement on the number and distribution of seats to be added to the Councils. His delegation regretted that the draft resolutions before the Committee for the expansion, whether of the General Committee or of the Councils, contained no provision for Commonwealth representation as such. Such an omission involved a principle as well as sentiment. Sentiment about the Commonwealth and the multi-racial approach which it represented was a powerful factor in the policies of his Government in and outside the United Nations. His delegation fully supported the observations made at the 422nd meeting by the representatives of Canada and Australia on the question of Commonwealth representation in the United Nations.

10. The Commonwealth countries had made a considerable contribution to the growth, work and success of the United Nations. By every standard they had played their part fully by observation of the principles of the Charter in their national and international policies, by firm support for the Organization's positive role in dealing with political and economic problems, by serving on its governing bodies, by their prompt and generous contributions to the United Nations budget, voluntary assistance and relief programmes and peace-keeping operations.

11. His delegation appreciated the reasons behind the increasing trend towards a regional approach to many international issues. It was especially understandable in a region such as Africa where many Member States had attained their nationhood within a year or so of each other and were faced with almost identical problems. The Commonwealth, however, was an institution which transcended regionalism and had a role to play in the United Nations tomorrow no less important than it had played in the last two decades. The polarization of the United Nations into groups based solely on geography or colour would be greatly regretted by New Zealand.

12. His Government, like that of Canada, Australia and others, felt strongly about the omission in the annex to draft resolution A/SPC/L.101 and Add.1 of the statement in foot-note 4 to rule 31 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly that at least one of the Vice-Presidencies should be from a Commonwealth country. The amendment (A/SPC/L.106) sponsored by Australia, Canada and New Zealand was designed not to effect any change in the geographical distribution but to retain a formal reference to the Commonwealth in the United Nations.

13. His delegation agreed that an increase of three Vice-Presidencies to bring the total to sixteen, and enlargement of the General Committee to twenty-four, as proposed in A/SPC/L.101 and Add.1, were appropriate measures. His delegation also agreed that it was equitable for the three additional posts to be allocated to African and Asian States, giving them seven in all, while the distribution of the remainder remained unaltered. It was less enthusiastic about the allocation of committee Chairmanships proposed in the annex to the draft resolution. An obvious anomaly was that a group such as Western Europe and other States numbering possibly over twenty would have, under the proposed distribution, one and a half seats—one seat one year and two the next, whereas the Eastern Europe group with nine members would have one Chairmanship. A similar anomaly, which made nonsense of the principle of equality,

was to be found in the amendment (A/SPC/L.107) submitted by Czechoslovakia and Poland.

14. Since the expansion of the Councils required amendment of the Charter, that was not an exercise to be undertaken lightly. The Committee should consider carefully the adequacy of proposed alterations and should judge them by the extent to which they met existing and future pressure for representation. In his delegation's opinion, expansion of the Councils by two and six seats respectively was insufficient to permit justice to be done to the under-represented newer Members without doing injustice to some of the older Members, including New Zealand and some other Commonwealth countries.

15. When the United Nations was founded, there had been six elective seats in the Security Council available for forty-six States, a ratio of about one to eight. With the doubling of membership in under twenty years, some increase in the ratio of seats to membership had to be accepted. Otherwise, governing bodies would become unwieldy, and the Security Council in particular would lose its essential quality of being able to act with speed in an emergency. On the other hand, Member States should have some prospect of election to the governing bodies. Otherwise, it might be difficult for them to sustain their interest in the work and purposes of the United Nations.

16. In his delegation's view, Member States wishing to serve on the Security Council and other bodies should have some prospect of serving at least once in every fifteen to twenty years. A shorter interval did not seem practicable for the majority of Member States, and a longer interval would be undesirable. The six elective seats in the Security Council were now available for 106 Member States, a ratio of nearly one to eighteen. On that basis an opportunity for election to the Council would occur on average once every thirty-four years, or only three times in each century. With the growing membership of the United Nations, that situation would worsen if the Security Council was not enlarged.

17. His delegation had initially favoured an increase of six elective seats so as to make twelve elective seats in the Security Council available to an estimated total membership of 126 in the near future, or a ratio of one to ten, which would improve the average recurrence of the opportunity to serve to once every eighteen years, or five times each century.

18. From the informal discussions which had been going on for some weeks, his delegation had come to realize that there was little support for an increase on that scale. There was, however, a growing body of opinion in favour of adding four seats to the Security Council, and his delegation shared that opinion.

19. His delegation did not favour an increase of only two seats in the Security Council because that would not permit of an equitable distribution of elective seats among the regions and groups entitled to be represented. According to one distribution proposal, two seats would be available to the Latin American group of twenty States, giving a ratio of one to ten; one to the Eastern Europe group, giving a ratio of one to nine; four to the fifty-six African and Asian States, giving a ratio of one to fourteen; and one to the Western Europe and "other States", presumably including the displaced Commonwealth nations, giving a ratio of roughly one to twenty. On the existing pattern of groupings in the Assembly and

so long as there were only eight elective seats the injustice thus done to Western Europe and "other States" could only be remedied by doing injustice to some other group.

20. An increase of four seats, however, to give a total of ten elective seats permitted a more equitable distribution. It had been suggested that five should be given to African and Asian States; two to Latin American States; two to Western Europe and other States; and one to Eastern Europe. That would represent a ratio of approximately one seat to ten Members for all groups, which, in his delegation's opinion, was an acceptable distribution.

21. Similar arguments applied to the Economic and Social Council, the particular requirements of which had been thoroughly analysed at the 422nd meeting by the representative of Australia. His delegation fully supported the Australian proposal that consideration be given to enlarging the Economic and Social Council by more than six members and agreed with the consensus of opinion that the Council should be enlarged to a total of twenty-seven members. That number would be more in keeping with the need for the Council to reflect adequately not only the different regions but also a balanced representation of donor and recipient, industrial and developing countries. A formula for a fair distribution of seats could be arrived at by continuing informal negotiations.

22. His delegation had wished to take an early opportunity to put its views on record because his country, like Canada, Australia and others, did not easily fit into any of the geographic regions usually invoked in all informal discussions on the distribution of elective seats.

23. Mr. OTHMAN (Malaysia) said it was gratifying to note that there was growing recognition within the United Nations of the need to expand the two Councils and the General Committee as the membership of the United Nations increased and to provide for more equitable representation in those bodies. His delegation, which had co-sponsored the proposals to include the relevant items in the agenda and draft resolution A/SPC/L.101 and Add.1, was fully aware of the difficulties involved in obtaining the ratification necessary to amend the provisions of the Charter relating to membership in the two Councils, but it hoped that ratification would be forthcoming in the near future so that the legitimate demand of the newer Member States for more equitable representation could be met. It doubted that a simple redistribution of the existing seats, as proposed by some delegations, would provide a satisfactory solution.

24. His delegation was in favour of the amendment in document A/SPC/L.106 because it would not alter the pattern of geographical distribution as proposed by the sponsors of draft resolution A/SPC/L.101 and Add.1 and because the concept of the Commonwealth as a group to be taken into consideration in the distribution of seats in the General Committee had been recognized by the United Nations for some years and should be preserved.

25. Mr. NAYERI (Iran) said that his delegation attached particular importance to items 81 and 82 because it wished to see the United Nations develop along realistic and practical lines, in a way which would enable it to discharge its functions satisfactorily. In basing the election of the non-permanent members of the Security Council on the principle of

geographical distribution, the authors of the Charter had been actuated by the desire to give that body a representative character. That principle was nothing new, for it constituted the foundation of any democratic system. The decisions taken by any assembly or parliament were more effective and commanded greater respect if that body was representative of all the elements concerned.

26. In the view of his delegation, and probably of the delegations of all Member States, membership in the General Committee and the two Councils was not an end in itself but a means of contributing to the realization of the ideals embodied in the Charter. The decisions of the United Nations would be respected and its actions justified only if Member States were convinced that the Organization was, in accordance with the provisions of Article 2, paragraph 1 of the Charter, based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members. In his view, that conviction was essential to the success of the Organization, for it was difficult to see how fifty-odd Member States could feel that its decisions were just if they were not adequately represented in its various bodies. In an era when the ideal of national independence had been superseded by that of international interdependence, peace, security and well-being had become an indivisible whole which belonged to all States, great or small, developed or under-developed, without distinction as to the race, colour or religion of their inhabitants. All had the obligation to contribute to the maintenance of world peace and security and, by the same token, the right to participate in the work of the bodies entrusted with that task. In the Introduction to his report^{1/} to the fifteenth session of the General Assembly the late Secretary-General had asked who could deny that the countries of Asia and Africa now represented powerful elements in the international community. Those powerful elements wished to place themselves at the service of the Organization and make an effective contribution to its work. In the case of the General Committee, the need to enlarge it as the membership of the Organization increased had been recognized as far back as the twelfth session, when a number of seats had been added with a view to ensuring equitable geographical distribution. If the increase from the original fifty-one Members in 1945 to eighty-two in 1957 had necessitated that change, a further increase was clearly in order now that the membership had risen to more than 110. All delegations seemed to share that view, and the problem was to reach agreement on the way in which the desired objective was to be attained. Some delegations thought that draft resolutions on the enlargement of the General Committee and the Councils should be considered simultaneously. The fact remained, however, that they constituted two separate agenda items and

that the procedure to be followed in the two cases and the implications of the decisions which might be taken with regard to them were different.

27. Although the question of equitable representation in the two Councils had been before the Assembly ever since its eleventh session no positive results had yet been achieved. Nevertheless, the efforts made in that direction had not been entirely fruitless, for in its resolution 1404 (XIV) the Assembly had formally recognized the need to provide for equitable representation of the countries of Africa and Asia in the two bodies. His delegation hoped that at the eighteenth session that expression of goodwill would be translated into positive action.

28. Mr. DE SOUZA (Jamaica) said that his delegation was in favour of the proposal that the General Committee should be enlarged, on the condition that the election of its members would be carried out in such a way as to provide for a stronger representation of certain Member States recently admitted to the United Nations. The enlarged membership should take into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution, but there were also other considerations which should be borne in mind. In particular, the rules of procedure provided that at least one seat in the General Committee should be held by a representative of the Commonwealth. Other speakers had noted the important contribution made by the Commonwealth to the work of the United Nations. For his own part, he would like to stress one feature of the Commonwealth which should be of particular significance from the standpoint of the Organization, namely that it was a group whose membership transcended considerations of race, geography, economic development and social organization, except in so far as all its members were dedicated to the parliamentary system of democracy and support of the rule of law. It would be an excellent gesture on the part of the United Nations to continue to recognize and support the existence of such a group in some tangible way. He was therefore in favour of the suggestion that by means of a simple addition to the annex to draft resolution A/SPC/L.101 and Add.1 the Committee should make it clear that it did not wish to see the Commonwealth as a group disappear entirely from the United Nations and that recognition would continue to be given to its existence in the form of a provision which, without altering the geographical distribution of the seats in the General Committee, would ensure a place in that body for a Commonwealth country.

29. He reserved the right to speak again on other aspects of draft resolution A/SPC/L.101 and Add.1 and on the draft resolutions submitted in connexion with agenda item 82 (A/SPC/L.104/Rev.1 and A/SPC/L.105).

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifteenth Session, Supplement No. 1A.